



Lake Mead National Recreation Area Environmental Education

FIELD PROGRAM

Grade 3 “Nature’s Neighborhoods”



A one-mile hike will enable students to compare a variety of plant communities that make up a desert environment.

THEME

The Mojave Desert consists of several communities that make up a desert environment.

OBJECTIVES

Students will compare at least two different plant communities in the Mojave Desert.

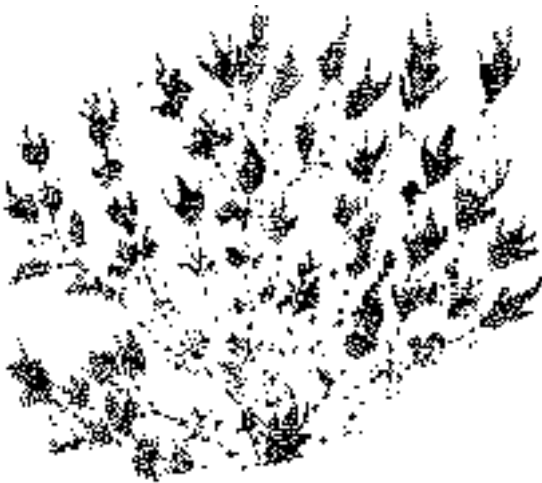
Students will describe at least one animal and one plant in each community.
Students will describe at least one animal/plant association.

VOCABULARY

desert - an area that receives less than ten inches of rainfall a year, experiences extreme temperatures and has a high rate of evaporation

habitat - the place and natural conditions in which a plant or an animal lives

plant community - an area with a predictable associated group of plants



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Mojave Desert contains several different natural communities. What is a community? It is a place where living things interact in an area of naturally associated species. Plant communities are based on elevation, soil types, amount of precipitation, and major habitat features such as cliffs, springs, washes, and dunes. Some organisms have very specific requirements for life. They can only live in very specific locations like the desert primrose which only lives on sandy dunes. Others like jackrabbits are found throughout the Mojave Desert and beyond its boundaries.

BEFORE THE FIELD TRIP ACTIVITY

Have the students create their own field journals in preparation for their trip to Lake Mead NRA. Journals provide a means of recording observations in the field and can be accessed at a later date for comparison studies. Before the field trip have students write the following plant communities (each one on the top of a different page): "Creosote Bush", "Desert Wash", and "Desert Spring or Wetlands". Please have the students bring their journals with them on the day of the field trip.

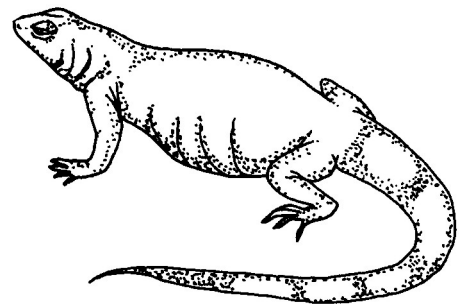
AFTER THE FIELD TRIP ACTIVITY

Now that the students have had an opportunity to compare various plant communities at Lake Mead NRA, have them explore their own school yard for different "neighborhoods" in nature.

REFERENCES

Buschbaum, Ralph and Mildred, Basic Ecology
The Boxwood Press, (1973)

Epple, Anne Orth, A Field Guide to the Plants of Arizona
Falcon Press, (1995)



MAKING A DIFFERENCE! Your students can begin to make a difference wherever they live! Have your class come up with a project using the experience from their field trip to Lake Mead National Recreation Area to show others that they care about our desert community.



Teachers! - check out our new web site with an extensive classroom section:
<http://www.nps.gov/lame/classroom>